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## Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable TOM UDALL, a Senator from the State of New Mexico.

### PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

O Merciful God, creator of humanity, You are the father of all. Equip our lawmakers for today's tasks. Give them wisdom and understanding so that their priorities will reflect Your purposes. Give them patience and skill so that their words will have persuasive power. Give them respect and civility so that Your presence will be felt in this Chamber.

We thank You for Your presence in our world and for the official cessation of hostilities in one area of our planet. Guided by Your presence, put into the hearts of our lawmakers Your concern for the lost, the lonely, and the least in our Nation and world.

We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.

### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable TOM UDALL led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

### APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. INOUE).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,  
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,  
Washington, DC, December 15, 2011.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable TOM UDALL, a Senator from the State of New Mexico, to perform the duties of the Chair.

DANIEL K. INOUE,  
President pro tempore.

Mr. TOM UDALL thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

### SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Following leader remarks, we will be in a period of morning business for 1 hour. The Republicans will control the first half and the majority will control the final half.

Following morning business, the Senate will be in executive session, as the order of last night indicates, to consider the nomination of Morgan Christen of Alaska to be a U.S. circuit judge for the Ninth Circuit. There will be 30 minutes of debate on that nomination. At a time to be determined later today, there will be a vote on confirmation of that nomination.

We are almost certain we are going to consider today the Department of Defense authorization conference report. The issue is how much time people may need, but I think we can work that out very quickly.

### RESOLVING THE ISSUES

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the Republican leader and I have done enough back and forth, staking out our positions, and our positions are fairly clear to the American people. What we are going to try to do during the next few hours is work toward resolving some of the outstanding issues.

I just had a very comfortable conversation with Senator INOUE and his

Appropriations chief of staff Charlie Houy, along with my chief of staff David Krone, and I think we have made pretty clear the issues that relate to the omnibus. I think, according to Senator INOUE, those issues should be resolvable. We have a few issues that are still outstanding, but they are small in number.

The House is suggesting moving forward on an individual bill. I think that would be a mistake. I think what we should do is the conference report, and I think that is the direction we are headed. There are a couple of issues we have to still work out with the White House, but I am in touch with them also.

On the payroll tax and unemployment tax extenders and SGR, the Republican leader and I have been in discussion on that issue. We hope we can come up with something that would get us out of here at a reasonable time in the next few days.

### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

### RESOLVING THE ISSUES

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I might just echo the remarks of the majority leader. We have been in useful discussions about how to wrap up the session. He has covered the two major issues that remain. We hope to be able to pass a combination of appropriations bills, and we are working hard to figure out a way to resolve the remaining differences on the payroll tax extension and the related issues that are important to both sides. We are confident and optimistic we will be able to resolve both on a bipartisan basis.

Mr. REID. Would the Chair announce the business of the day.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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